



Quantock Hills AONB Service

2014 / 15 Business Plan



2014/15 Business Plan – Setting the Priorities

1. Priority Setting:

- a. In November 2010 the Quantock Hills AONB JAC went through a priority setting exercise. This was in response to known reduction in funding from core partners. At the time of the priority setting exercise the level of reduction was unknown but scenarios were run of 5% reduction (best case) to 30% reduction (worst case). Appendix 1 shows the results and will inform the direction of work of the AONB Service.

2. Management Plan Review

- a. The 2009-2014 Management Plan is required to be reviewed and that review agreed and the plan adopted by 1 April 2014 under the CRow Act 2000 (Sc 89). The revised plan will cover the timeframe 2014 – 19.
- b. Currently the Management Plan 2014-19 is in an advanced draft form and therefore this Business Plan is based upon objectives and actions which are potentially subject to change.
- c. In April 2013 the AONB Service undertook the initial consultation to inform the Management Plan review. Part of the consultation involved the priority and importance to draft objectives for the forthcoming Management Plan. Appendix 2 details the objectives presented and the priority placed upon them. These priorities are used to inform the Action Plan for the upcoming year and will be superseded in following years by the AONB Management Plan Delivery Plan.

3. Other drivers:

- a. The AONB Service is still expecting significant reductions in its contributions from all core funders. 2014/15 is the last year of the current Comprehensive Spending Review period and Defra have set its expected funding with an annual 5.4% reduction inline with the previous 4 years. Local authorities are also experiencing continued reductions to their budgets and this is likely to impact on contributions to the AONB. The reduction in funding requires the AONB Service to investigate a different business or operations model. This work began in 2011/12 with the setting up of a working group of the Quantock Hills JAC, the Future Directions Working Group. The group has created an adaptation plan which will investigate a mix of 'belt-tightening', income generation and operational changes to ensure a sustainable partnership continues into the future. It is suggested that the adaptation plan is revisited and refreshed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- b. Due to the reduction of government grant to local authorities Somerset County Council, host to the Quantock Hills AONB, has undertaken a full review of services. The aim of this change programme is to make SCC smaller, more flexible and more 'customer led'. The service area that the AONB Service is embedded was reviewed and merged with others in March 2013 however there will be further reviews as funding decreases further.
- c. Defra strategic priorities. In June 2013 Defra informed AONB Partnership of their priority areas of work for the coming years. The highest priority is growing the rural economy, with further priorities of improving the environment, safeguarding animal health and safeguarding plant health. There is a challenge for AONBs to show Defra how they

meet these priorities as well as demonstrating the evidence base of the impact of further funding cuts from central government.

4. Delivery Mechanisms

- a. Due to the reduction in core funding the AONB Service will base the 2014/15 Business Plan on the existing AONB team model. There will be amendment in post roles to ensure most effective use of skill-sets and to ensure the AONB realise funding / income opportunities.
- b. Longer term the delivery mechanism will be informed by the Funding Agreement (post March 2015) which will set out the indicative funding for the next 3-years.

Table 1 AONB team structure 2014/15.

Existing AONB Team	FTE	Function
AONB Manager	1	Day to day management of the team, developing AONB policy, commenting on behalf of JAC on statutory consultations and ensuring good working practices with all partnerships. Lead on Management Plan review and Future Directions.
Development Officer	1	Develops and delivers the action plan through the AONB team, external contractors and organisations. Seeks external funding opportunities to implement projects which deliver the statutory AONB Management Plan. Develops income streams which will support the funding of the AONB Partnership and Service.
Landscape Planning Officer	0.4	This post develops comments and guidance on planning and links with the local planning authorities to ensure that any development is sensitive to the needs of the AONB landscape.
Ranger*	1	Key role is recreation and access, heritage and land management. Also undertakes project development and delivery, especially working with local communities.
Partnership Ranger* (shared)	0.5	Key role includes events and recreation management and delivery. Also undertakes delivery on SCC amenity land and visitor management
Volunteer Coordinator (shared)	0.6	To develop volunteering opportunities, including enhancement of the existing joint Quantock volunteer group.
Communication Officer	0.4	Role includes producing all literature, digital media, managing the AONB website and dealing with media enquiries
Support Officer	0.6	Role includes administration, finance, secretariat to working groups
Total FTE	5.5	* NOTE - Ranger and Partnership Ranger roles may change with appointment of new postholder in Feb 2014.

5. Quantock Hills budget 2014/15

- a. Table 2 shows the summary budget for 2014/15 based on indicative contribution figures supplied by the AONB partners at the November Officers Working Group. The funding will not be confirmed until February 2014 by local authority funding partners. Defra have indicated their 2014/15 grant at £153,133, subject to a successful grant application. A full budget can be found in Appendix 3.
- b. Project development will look to attract external funding for projects identified in the Action Plan (section 5). Further work will be undertaken to develop an alternative delivery model for the AONB Partnership and Team to reduce reliance on exchequer funding.
- c. As a condition of the Statement of Intent (a requirement of the Defra grant) the AONB Service is required to hold an earmarked reserve which is to be used in the event of redundancies. This removes further financial liability from the partners. This is shown as a separate budget line and is not available as discretionary funds. The reserve has come from non-exchequer sources and was secured by postponing a number of projects in 2011/12.
- d. The budget will deliver the Action Plan (Sc 5) which will work to the priorities identified in Sc 1. To this extent continued funding has been identified for a Volunteer Coordinator post and volunteer activities.
- e. The budget shows income against ES. This is primarily recharge and cost recovery for land management activity such as swaling which the AONB Service undertakes on Quantock Common SSSI. Swaling is a conservation management tool used on heathland. The AONB Service has previously undertaken this with no recharge to the landowner or commoners association. For 2014/15 the AONB Service will operate a cost recovery system, though not necessarily full-cost, for any scheme where it is asked to undertake swaling. There is also recharge against the Amenity Land budget for management of Cothelstone Hill, Lydeard Hill car park and Triscombe car park on behalf of SCC.
- f. The Mendip Hills AONB recharge is for the Volunteer Coordinator post. This is a joint post with Quantock and Mendip Hills AONB. Quantock Hills will retain budget and line management with day to day supervision undertaken by the local AONB officer. The Forestry Commission recharge is for the Partnership Ranger post.

Table 2: Quantock Hills AONB Service Budget 2014 – 15 (summary)

Core Expenditure	2013 14	2014 15	Notes	INCOME	2013 14	2014 15	Notes
Salaries, NI, SA	172,000	196,102		Defra	165,621	153,133	5
Accommodation	23,185	23,840		SCC	21,500	21,500	5
Training, Travel, vehicles costs	22,990	18,666		TDBC	10,000	10,000	5
Partnership Running Costs	21,800	9,700	1	SDC	11,500	11,500	5
Partnership Budget	7,125	800	2	WSC	9,957	9,957	5
Core Expenditure	247,100	249,108		ES	0	4,000	6
SDF Expenditure				Mendip Hills AONB	6,450	9,720	7
Projects	21,995	0	3	FC Contribution	17,300	13,000	7
Project Expenditure				Misc (inc events)	4,929	1,300	
Invasive species control	15,000	0		Core Income	247,257	234,110	
Stepping up to the Market	14,562	0		Ext Project Income			
Volunteer Development	4,727	0		TOTAL	30,865	0	
Access	700	1,000	4	RIA Brought Forward	77,222	51,544	
Misc Projects	4,011	0		<i>EARMARKED RESERVE</i>	<i>35,079</i>	<i>26,054</i>	8
Project Expenditure	39,000	0		SUMMARY			
Amenity Land Expenditure				TOTAL INCOME	355,344	285,654	
Contractors, equipment & Materials	23,500	8,000		TOTAL EXPENDITURE	338,879	276,162	
Fees, hired, materials	8,000	5,000		Surplus / Deficit	16,465	9,492	
Amenity Land Expenditure	31,500	13,000	9				

NOTES:

- 1 – Reduction in budget as Management Plan review will be complete and return of Landscape Planning Officer reduces consultants costs.
- 2 – Reduction in budget as publicity / promotion budget withdrawn
- 3 – Stopping SDF to accommodate reduction in core income. If underspend in 2013/14 can be carried forward there may be opportunity for a small SDF pot
- 4 – Volunteer budget moved into Core
- 5 – Estimated contributions based on Statement of Intent.
- 6 – ES is cost-recovery income based on AONB Service undertaking land management activities
- 7 – Recharge to Mendip Hills and Forestry Commission for contribution to volunteer coordinator and partnership ranger posts respectively
- 8 – Earmarked reserves based on total cost of whole team redundancy payment. Reduction due to changes in postholders.
- 9 – Amenity Land is a ring-fenced SCC budget managed by the AONB Service for management of Cothelstone Hill and other amenity land holdings. It is shown here for illustrative purposes only.

Action Plan 2014/15

- a. The Action Plan below identifies delivery against Defra core duties of an AONB Unit ([Appendix 5](#)), Management Plan Action Point Delivery and Core Duties delivery, such as line management. Against the delivery is an assessment of AONB resources required by post and number of days. With some delivery there will be more than one post associated with delivery, but the first post listed will be the lead on that item of work. Table 3 Identifies 3 headline areas of work the AONB Service will be undertaking during 2014/15. Table 4 is the full action plan.
- b. Hinkley Point C – Potential funding under the Sc106 (site preparation) and DCO (main build). The Quantock Hills AONB Service has been identified as a delivery agent for the Landscape and Visual Delivery Plan. The identified schemes of work are significant (in respect of the AONB Service) and require resource to deliver them, which has been identified under the Sc106. At the time of writing the AONB Service is unsure if/when the funding associated with the Sc106 and DCO will be released and has designed the schemes of work so they can be delivered alongside the action plan. [Appendix 6](#) contains summary information on the schemes of work to be delivered under the Landscape and Visual Delivery Plan as agreed by the Quantock Hills JAC, 27 July 2012.

Table 3: Our top 3 headline work areas

Activity
<u>Visitors, Access & Economy.</u> Objective – VRA2, To monitor visitor trends and activities, including impacts on the special qualities of the AONB. Action VRA2/1 Undertake quantitative visitor survey which will aim to provide estimate of visitor numbers, types, economic input and is comparable to existing visitor surveys
<u>Biodiversity, Wildlife & Habitats:</u> Objective – W1, To maintain and enhance the biodiversity and ecological health of the Quantocks in a landscape scale context. Action – W1/1, Undertake assessment of biodiversity connectivity within the Quantock Hills AONB to create a prioritised ‘gaps’ analysis.
<u>Development & Infrastructure.</u> Objective – DI1, To ensure AONB involvement and influence in planning processes affecting the AONB. Action DI1/2, Engage with study to assess the effectiveness of local planning decisions and implications for the AONB

Key:

AM	AONB Manager	DO	Development Officer	LP	Landscape Planner	Ranger and Partnership Ranger roles may change with appointment of new postholder in Feb 2014.
R	Ranger	PR	Partnership Ranger	VC	Volunteer Coordinator	
CO	Communications Officer	SA	Support Assistant			
Other resource includes other organisations that will be assisting with action. Highlighted resources are yet to confirm or contacted regarding involvement.						

Table 4 Quantock Hills AONB Service 2014/15 Action Plan

MP Act	Ref	Defra duty	Action	Milestone / Target	AONB Lead / support	Partners
LANDSCAPE QUALITY						
	1	A	Publish and promote Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19	Digital copy of AONB Management Plan produced and available on AONB website.	AM / CO	
	2	G	Develop funding bids to support delivery of Quantock Hills Management Plan 2014-19.	Stage 1 bid complete and submitted	DO / AM	NE, NT, others
	3	F	Undertake fixed point photography monitoring on 12 sites to provide a visual record of landscape and change over time including views into and from the AONB	Take photographs from 12 sites during 2013.	DO / VC	Volunteers
LAND MANAGEMENT: FARMING & FORESTRY						
W1/2	4	C	Deliver a Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES) to undertake works which will prevent or control Phytophthora diseases as a measure to stop the spread of the disease to the lowland heath habitats throughout the Quantock Hills AONB	50Ha of control or follow up work undertaken on invasive species as agreed by Natural England	DO	Natural England
W2/1	5	C	Run plant/disease awareness workshop with the aim of (a) informing landowners of monitoring that can be undertaken (b) assessing the risks and potential solution to the landscape of the Quantock Hills.	Workshop held for landowners / stakeholders / JAC July 2014.	AM	
LM2/2	6	C F	Host a SAC woodland management meeting to promote management activity by landowners, NE and others	Meeting held Sept 2014. Agreed action plan April 2015.	AM	Landowners, NE, FE, QCA
	7		Manage on behalf of SCC amenity land sites including animal welfare checks, income generation (HLS, SPS)	Delivery of agreed HLS programme, including claiming HLS & SPS	DO / PR / R / VC	Volunteers
	8		Undertake swaling programme agreed by QCMG for enhancement of Quantock Common SSSI	Agreed swaling programme completed. Income generation required for AONB Service to	PR / R, VC	Volunteers

				undertaken action		
BIODIVERSITY: WILDLIFE & HABITATS						
W1/3	9	C F	Support continued monitoring of important species to inform future management plans for Quantock Common and surrounding agricultural land	Adder population and hibernacula survey carried out on 2 sites Bat transects undertaken at 2 sites Butterfly transects undertaken at 2 sites Dormouse Monitoring at 2 site	DO / R, PR, VC	SRAG (lead), Reaseheath College, SBG, Volunteers
W1/3	10	C F	Support monitoring of Pied Flycatchers on Quantock Hills and feed into regional project on effects of climate change on indicator species	Monitoring of 150 boxes in key locations throughout AONB	PR	Exeter University (lead), BTO, NE, Volunteers
W1/1	11	I C	Undertake assessment of biodiversity connectivity within the Quantock Hills AONB to create a prioritised 'gaps' analysis.	Research commissioned – June 2014. Research completed – June 2015	DO	
W4/1	12		Engage with FC Forest Design Plans for Quantock woods	Comments considered and FDP published March 2015	AM	FE
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT & CULTURAL INFLUENCES						
H3/2	13		Publish and promote results of monitoring of heritage assets.	Pdf summary of baseline survey available Dec 2014.	CO / VC	EH
GEOLOGY & COAST						
DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE						
L1/2	14	B F	Undertake visual intrusion study which will prioritise removal or mitigation action.	Visual intrusion study complete by March 2015.	LP	Volunteers
L1/1	15	D	Engage with study to assess the effectiveness of local planning decisions and implications for the AONB	Local planning decisions report presented to partnership Dec 2014	AM	FoQ
DI2/1	16	K	Monitor planning applications in and around the AONB and identify any potential damaging developments. Comment on potentially damaging applications on behalf of the JAC	Planning Database up to date and reporting back against database possible through GIS. Comments sent to relevant planning authorities	LP / SA	
DI2/2	17	K	Engage with Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation	Relevant LDF consultation responses sent	LP	
	18	E J	Make AONB planning comments available on the website (or synopsis with link) to ensure partners and communities can see AONB response to planning application	All planning comments to be upload to AONB Service website within 10 days of submission	SA	

H2/2	19	F J	Undertake research into Quantock hedgerow and linear features to better understand their importance in terms of landscape,	Project Plan agreed Sept 2014 Project report published April 2016	DO / VC	Research bodies, volunteers
L4/2	20	F	Further develop a more detailed LCA for the Quantock Hills AONB to ensure more targeted approach to conservation and enhancement of landscape	Adoption of Quantock Hills LCA by Quantock Hills JAC April 2015	LP / AM	
VISITORS, ACCESS & THE LOCAL ECONOMY						
VRA4 /1	21	B	Monitor non-AONB event use of the Quantock Hills AONB to provide evidence of use and provide guidance to event organisers to minimise impact of events on the AONB	Assess all event forms received and provide comment / guidance where necessary Review event notification procedure to ensure fit for purpose	PR	
VRA3 /1	22	B	Encourage use of off-hilltop promoted routes through development of innovative engagement tools, such as digital personal interpretation.	Funding secured to develop interpretation for off-hilltop promoted routes	PR / DO	
VRA2 /2	23	F	Collect bi-annual data from 15 visitor counters installed through the Quantock Hills and disseminate information to partners	Information collected, processed and disseminated. Information in format to be used as evidence in funding bids	DO / VC	Volunteers
VRA4 /1	24	B	Engage with event organisers to ensure notification of events occurring on the hills. Offer advice to ensure minimal adverse impact from events to the landscape, tranquillity and natural environment of the Quantock Hills	Event monitoring information available to landowners / interested people	PR / SA	
VRA5 /1	25	B	Ensure on the ground presence during busy periods to engage visitors and provide information.	24 days patrol throughout year, with volunteer involvement	R / PR	Volunteers
	26	C	Limit vehicle damage to hilltop tracks through engagement with user groups.	Access agreement in place with main user groups	AM / R	
VRA3 /1	27	I	Carry out site and promoted route audits and carry out safety works		R / PR	Volunteers
VRA2 /2	28	B J	Undertake quantitative visitor survey which will aim to provide estimate of visitor numbers, types, economic input and is comparable to existing visitor surveys	Survey undertaken – end of July 2014. Report complete end of Oct 2014.	AM / VC	Volunteers
COMMUNITY & VOLUNTEERING						
CV2/ 1	29	J	VOLUNTEERS – Continued engagement with Quantock Countryside Volunteers ensuring tasks occurring through AONB area.	3,000 volunteer hours completed.	VC / R, PR	
L3/1	30	J	VOLUNTEERS - Volunteer involvement in local events and other visitor management to raise	30 volunteer work days spent at local events or engaged in visitor	VC / R	

			AONB profile and provide information.	management activity		
H2/1	31	J	VOLUNTEERS – Volunteer involvement in Scheduled Monument Monitoring Scheme.	2 field surveys of 95% of SM undertaken, report collated and disseminated.	VC	English Heritage
W1/3	32	J F	VOLUNTEERS – Volunteer involvement in wildlife & heritage asset monitoring throughout the AONB	2 bird surveys 2 bat transect monitored 2 butterfly transects monitored 1 site monitored for dormice All SM monitored twice	VC / DO	National Trust, EH, BCT, SBG
CV1/2	33	C J	Deliver Sustainable Development Fund to fund local projects which will deliver Management Plan objectives. DEPENDANT UPON C/F	Fully expenditure against SDF with project targets being fully met	DO	SDF Panel
CV1/2	34	J	Encourage and practically support community initiatives such as parish plans in and around the AONB to help local communities protect the character of their locality and ensure local distinctiveness is integral to the local community	Development of Parish Plans or other relevant initiatives supported by AONB Service	R	
	35	C J	Provide secretariat and support for Quantock Commons Management Group (QCMG), Quantock Police & Conservation Agencies Working Group (QPCAWG) and Coleridge Way Steering Group (CWSG)	2 meetings of each group. Meeting notes and progress on actions recorded	SA / DO, R, CO	
	36	C J	Provide on the ground support to the Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group (QDMCG) deer count	Deer Count undertaken and results fed back to QDMCG and JAC	R / SA	
UNDERSTANDING						
L3/1	37	B	Provide 11 events open to the public, including specialist walks and events aimed at families.	300 people attending AONB events	CO / SA, R, PR, DO, VC	Other leaders (11)
E1/3	38	B	Distribute AONB Visitor Guide through the LIPs distribution points	Restocking of LIPs distribution points x 4	CO	
L3/1	39	B	AONB Service attendance at 3 local shows / events to promote the AONB Service and provide information to local communities	3 x local shows attended – 1 in each district.	SA / CO, VC, DO, PR, R	Volunteers
E1/1	40	B	Publish and distribute e-newsletter. Hardcopy can be printed off for distribution through schools	At least 4 newsletters produced with distribution to 1,100 individuals	CO / SA	
E1/1	41	B	Regularly update the website and social media to include blogs, news items, planning comments etc	New content to be added on at least a weekly basis	CO	
E1/1	42	B	Produce media content (press release direct media contact) to include standard messages	6 press releases sent out with 50% picked up by local media	CO	

			(lambing, ticks etc) as well as specific project successes			
	43	E	Produce and distribute a annual report to show progress against AONB Management Plan Targets	Annual Report produced and distributed by end of June 2012	AM / CO	
LM1/4	44	C	Delivery of 3 workshops for public and stakeholders to raise importance of Atlantic oak woods for lower plants species.	3 workshops held with 45 attendees	DO / VC	Plantlife (lead)
CORE DUTIES / PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT						
	45	E I	OWG and JAC reports produced. These reports will provide monitoring against the action plan targets	4 OWG reports and 4 JAC reports produced.	AM	
	46	D G	Develop new business opportunities through joint working with relevant groups / organisations. Include development of non-exchequer income generation.	Partnership approval for adoption of income streams.	DO / AM	
	47	D	Write /DEFRA AONB bid with input from OWG and JAC partnership.	DEFRA bid accepted	AM/IP	
	48	I	Host 4 OWG and JAC meetings – April, July, November and February 2014 to allow informed and engaged ownership of partnership by JAC.	4 OWG meetings held. 4 JAC meeting held	AM / SA, DO, R, PR	
	49	I	Regular meetings of AONB Service team to review AONB Management activities and issues	45 meetings held.	All team 6 days each	
	50	H	Membership and involvement in the NAAONB to ensure national and regional liaison and to ensure that the NAAONB represents the views of the Quantock Hills partnership	Attendance at Lead Officers meetings and other meetings where applicable	AM	
	51		Annual risk assessment reviews, instigate new H&S procedures in line with good practice.		AM	
	52		Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations		AM / DO	
	53		Undertake a range of support activities such as answering enquiries, filing, procurement etc		SA	
	54		1-1 management meetings, annual PRaD meetings staff management		AM / DO	

Appendix 1: Priority Setting Work –

1. Quantock Hills Partnership Prioritise. In November 2010 the Quantock Hills JAC undertook an exercise to prioritise the areas of work it felt the AONB Service should undertake in light of reduced resources (funding and staffing). The table below (A1.1) shows these priorities.

Table A1.1 Priority work for the AONB Service:

Action	Partnership Priority	Mgt Plan Priority	G'ment Priority	Overall Priority	Response
SDF	High	High		High	NEED TO DO
Planning – Strategic development	High	High		High	
Volunteer Development	High	High	High ¹	High	
Volunteer Tasks	High	High	High ¹	High	
Amenity Land – <i>if income received</i>	High	-		High (with income)	
Wildlife - Monitoring	Medium	High	High ²	High	
Wildlife – Enhancement	Medium	High	High ²	High	
Facilitating – Local communities	High	High	High ¹	High	
Event – Others	High	Low		Medium	TRY TO DO, INVESTIGATE ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF DOING
Planning – Development Management	Medium	High		Medium	
Planning – Local / Regional Consultation	Medium	High		Medium	
Visitor Mgt	High	Low		Medium	
Other Land Mgt – <i>if income received</i>	Medium	-		Medium (with income)	
Event – AONB	Medium	Low		Medium	
Education	Medium	High		Medium	
Information Provision	Medium	High		Medium	
Consultation	Medium	High		Medium	
Facilitating – Agriculture	Low	High		Medium	
Facilitating – Forestry	Low	High		Medium	
Climate Change	Low	Low		Low	DO NOT DO UNLESS THROUGH EXTERNAL FUNDING AND/OR RESOURCES
Rights of Way	Low	Low		Low	
Open Access	Low	Low		Low	
Coast & Geology	Low	Low		Low	
Heritage & Local Distinctiveness	Low	Low		Low	
Traffic & Country Lanes	Low	Low		Low	

Note 1. In his letter to the NAAONB Richard Benyon, MP stated that AONBs 'have a fundamental role in meeting our [Governments] environmental objectives and delivering big society.'

Note 2. The Lawton Review 'Making space for Nature' reported to SoS for Environment and DEFRA in September. Sc 6.3.2 makes specific recommendations on National Parks and AONBs stating that '...these [National Parks and AONBs] provide an excellent base for delivering a more effective ecological network, not least because their legal standing, governance and management plans provide a basis for coordinated action to integrate effective ecological networks with landscape and other uses...'

Note 3. Other duties are not covered under these headings such as budget and line management. Also does not show where other AONB staff support lead in delivery.

Appendix 2: Management Plan Consultation – Priority areas of work.

Stage 1 Public Consultation, summer 2013.

Key priorities identified include:

Landscape

- Protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat over the Quantock landscape
- Look after cultural, historic or archaeologically important features
- Support sensitive local farming
- Encourage positive management of woodlands
- Monitor and support natural healthy ecosystems (water, air, soil, food etc.)

Communities, Economy, Enjoyment

- Support sustainable tourism and recreation
- Support the local economy and encourage local business
- Support good maintenance and enhancement of footpaths, bridleways and promoted routes
- Reduce the negative effects of inappropriate vehicle use
- Conserve and improve local distinctiveness and character

Top objectives

- To protect and enhance the landscape and character of the AONB
- To develop the role of community groups and volunteers in the management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- To protect the wild character, wildlife sites and species, cultural landscape and architectural heritage of the AONB
- To maintain practical AONB staff on the ground to manage Rights of Way misuse and reduce access problems such as sheep worrying and summer fires
- To maintain and enhance the biodiversity and ecological health of the Quantocks with particular focus on the Strategic Nature Areas of Upland Oakwood and Heathland

Stage 1 Stakeholder Consultation, summer 2013 [Green = top 5 priorities / Red = bottom 5 priorities]

Ref	Objective	Score
L1	To protect and enhance the landscape and character of the AONB	60
F1	To protect and enhance the wildlife, landscape and character of Quantock farmland	46
F2	To conserve and promote proper management of Quantock hedges and associated banks	40
FW1	To further develop the sensitive management of woodland and plantations to protect, enhance and extend the distinctive character, landscape and wildlife of the Quantocks	51
FW2	To maintain or enlarge current levels of native woodland cover and protect	47

	areas of semi-natural woodland in the AONB	
W1	To maintain and enhance the biodiversity and ecological health of the Quantocks with particular focus on the Strategic Nature Areas of Upland Oakwood and Heathland	52
W2	To support development of agri-environment schemes and site management plans in or bordering the AONB	35
W3	To limit the encroachment of invasive species across the AONB	45
H1	Contribute to the protection, conservation, recording and enhancement of historic and culturally significant Quantock landscapes and archaeological features	49
GC1	Maintain example exposures of Quantock geology where they do not significantly mar the landscape, and to explore the potential of disused quarries	24
GC2	To protect the high quality of Quantock coastal habitats and their distinctive landscape contribution	40
CE1	To prepare the AONB for the impacts and opportunities of climate change	24
CE2	To minimise the carbon footprint of the AONB Service and support a low carbon Quantock economy	19
CE3	To support the capacity of the AONB to deliver the services of a healthy functioning ecosystem including clean water and air, productive soil and healthy food, carbon management, flood risk mitigation, biodiversity, recreation opportunities and inspirational landscape	40
CE4	To further the understanding and protection of the water catchment role of the Quantock Hills	23
D1	To protect the wild character, wildlife sites and species, cultural landscape and architectural heritage of the AONB	54
D2	To ensure AONB involvement and influence in planning processes affecting the AONB	41
D3	To protect the views out from the AONB through involvement in the planning process	33
D4	To support the protection of local distinctiveness in the AONB settlements	31
V1	To widen and adapt access opportunities across the AONB to protect wildlife, benefit visitors and support businesses in local communities	45
V2	To monitor visitor trends and activities, including impacts on Special Areas of Conservation	36
A1	To ensure public access areas, Rights of Way and promoted routes are useable and maintained to a high Standard	42
A2	To reduce user conflict and limit damage to Rights of Way and landscape quality from recreational uses including off-road driving	44
A3	To maximise access opportunities for people of all ability levels	30
A4	To maintain practical AONB staff on the ground to manage Rights of Way misuse and reduce access problems such as sheep worrying and summer fires	53
T1	To lessen the negative sustainability and quality of life impacts of vehicular traffic in the AONB and protect locally distinctive Quantock roads and lanes	18
T2	To pursue the maintenance and sensitive repair of locally distinctive cast iron style road signs in and around the AONB	31
C1	To support sustainable village and rural projects which address AONB Management Plan related issues	29
C2	To support the local economy and sustainable marketing initiatives where these relate to AONB designation objectives	28
C3	To encourage the use of local facilities by local communities and visitors	19
C4	To develop the role of community groups and volunteers in the management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	59
E1	To update and improve the quality and accessibility of Quantock information for AONB visitors, schools and local communities	37
E2	To further develop the educational and research resources of the AONB	22

Appendix 3: Quantock Hills AONB Service – detailed budget 2014 / 15

Expenditure	2013 14	2014 15	Comments
Salaries	172,000	153,328	No maternity cover for Support Assistant post
Additional Hours	-	6,033	
National Insurance	-	9,364	
Superannuation	-	27,377	
Staff Training	1,800	2,000	
Electricity	100	100	Based on previous years figures
NNDR - Rates	900	900	Based on previous years figures
Rents	9,845	10,700	Sheet 2
Water Charges	300	300	Based on previous years figures
Cleaning Charges	200	200	Based on previous years figures
Insurance - premises	40	40	Based on previous years figures
Car allowance	4,400	1,900	Sheet 3
Hired vehicle costs	0	0	Sheet 3
Travel costs	1,230	500	Sheet 3
Vehicle costs - Fuel	3,340	3,340	Sheet 3
Vehicle costs - Tyres	300	300	Sheet 3
Vehicle costs - Licence	50	50	Sheet 3
Vehicle costs - Insurance	990	990	Sheet 3
Vehicle costs - Maintenance	3,000	1,700	Sheet 3
Vehicle costs - Lease	7,780	7,786	Sheet 3
Equipment	5,700	4,180	Sheet 2
Equipment R&M	3000	920	Sheet 2
Literature & Pubs	500	0	Sheet 4
Publicity & Promotion	4,000	500	Sheet 4
Clothing & Uniform	1,200	200	Sheet 2
Research & Development	7,700	1,200	Sheet 4
Reprographics - photocopy/printing	700	300	Sheet 5
Stationary	1,500	1,500	Sheet 5
Postage	300	300	Sheet 5
Phone rental/Mobile Phones	1,300	1,100	Sheet 5
Subsistence	100	100	Sheet 5
Cost of Meetings (External)	1,200	700	Sheet 5
Subscriptions	3,000	2,500	Sheet 5
Insurance	450	450	Sheet 5
Management Fee to SCC	8,250	8,250	

Cross-Service charge	1,925	0	Sheet 5
TOTAL CORE	247,100	249,108	

SDF Expenditure			
F&H Pref/ Tech Services	17,700	0	
TOTAL	17,700	0	

Project Expenditure			
Contractor Costs	39,000	1,000	
TOTAL	39,000	1,000	

EARMARKED RESERVES	35,079	26,054	To cover whole team redundancy
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INCOME

Defra	165,621	153,133	
SCC	21,500	21,500	
TDBC	10,000	10,000	
SDC	11,500	11,500	
WSC	9,957	9,957	
ES	0	4,000	Amount used as revenue from ES schemes
Mendip Hills AONB	6,450	9,720	recharge for volunteer coord post
FC Contribution	17,300	13,000	recharge for Ptn Ranger post. Part yr cont 2014/15
Events	4,929	1,300	
Core Income	247,257	234,110	

Ext Project Income			
Various	30,865	0	
TOTAL	30,865	0	

RIA Brought Forward	77,222	51,544	Previous year Surplus / Deficit + Earmarked Reserves

SUMMARY			
TOTAL INCOME	355,344	285,654	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	338,879	276,162	
Surplus / Deficit	16,465	9,492	

Appendix 5: Defra's Core duties of an AONB Unit

Core function	Explanation
a) Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRoW Act AONB Management Plan	The management plan is the most significant statutory duty placed upon Local Authorities and in turn AONB managers by the 2000 CRoW Act. Its preparation and review should involve local stakeholders.
b) Raising awareness of the AONB, and promoting the AONB vision and the management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside	Raising awareness of the AONB and its special characteristics. Promoting the partnership's vision of the AONB's future and the plan for securing it. The output could be a glossy publication, a series of promotional events, a local media campaign or any combination of these. The vision needs to explain why the AONB is important and why special management measures are needed to protect and enhance it.
c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan	Taking positive steps to support the implementation of the actions in the management plan including getting other local and regional stakeholders to play their part too. It will be important to assess performance locally of CRoW Act 'relevant bodies' in respect section 85 of the Act.
d) Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service(attain the highest possible standards) in countryside management	This is a nationally significant landscape attracting central as well as local government resources for its continued protection. LA countryside management, rights of way, planning, and other relevant services affecting it need to be encouraged to "go the extra mile" to conserve, enhance and celebrate the special qualities of the AONB in decision making and through prioritising funding to ensure investment in ongoing sensitive management.
e) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets	At the end of the year a published report on progress and achievement of the AONB team against agreed targets is needed. It will enable you to claim credit for success, and can be used to assure funders that AONB funds are being well used and to support fundraising efforts.
f) Monitoring AONB landscape condition	A key activity but one which will run over a long period and will enable an assessment of whether the AONB Management Plan is delivering the LA statutory duty to conserve and enhance the AONB.
g) Accessing resources for management activities	Identifying and making use of a wide range of funding opportunities and securing non financial assistance for the delivery of any AONB purposes.

<p>h) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, Participating in and promoting joint working between AONBs and across protected landscapes family.</p>	<p>Using training and developmental opportunities (e.g. workshops, seminars, NAAONB conference), sharing good practice. Seeking opportunities for collaborative working with other protected landscapes, Contributing to objectives of the AONB family and protected landscapes as a whole.</p>
<p>i) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level.</p>	<p>Action and management within the AONB team to ensure provision of a first class service in supporting delivery of AONB purposes. In addition helping where appropriate partners in planning their contribution to delivery of AONB objectives. This could be via their business planning processes and other relevant documents (eg Community plans).</p>
<p>j) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB</p>	<p>Promoting interest, understanding and involvement in the management of the area amongst communities both inside and outside the AONB, by providing mechanisms through which their views can be heard and acted upon.</p>
<p>k) Providing landscape related planning advice</p>	<p>Influencing planning policies (eg, local development documents) and supplementary guidance such as design guides and development control decisions in line with AONB purposes.</p>

Appendix 6: Summary – schemes of work – HPC Sc106, landscape and visual delivery plan.

1. Introduction.

- a. The Quantock Hills AONB Service has been identified as a delivery agent for the Landscape and Visual Delivery Plan. The identified schemes of work are significant (in respect of the AONB Service) and require resource to deliver them, which has been identified under the Sc106 / DCO.
- b. The original Sc106 schemes of work were agreed by the HPC partners (April 2012) and JAC (July 2012) with funding to be released to SCC, via WSC, on phase 2 of the site preparation works. Since this time the development has received consent from the IPC and there is potential for the mitigation works under the main DCO to be combined with the Sc106 mitigation associated with the site preparation works.
- c. Somerset County Council has requested the AONB Service to submit scheme proposals, based on those originally agreed in July 2012. These proposals will be presented to the OWG and JAC in April prior to submission to SCC. This will allow the schemes to be started if/once the HPC development begins.

2. Landscapes & Visual Schedules.

- a. Under the Landscape & Visual Schedules of the Sc106 / DCO there are 5 funding strands, Landscape Improvement Scheme (LIS), Landscape Development Fund (LDF), Landscape Arts Project, Rural land based skills scheme and project officer revenue funding.
- b. The Quantock Hills AONB Service is identified as the delivery agent for the LIS and LDF. Initially under the Sc106 the project officer resource (£30,000 per year) was to deliver and manage these schemes and would go to the delivery organisation. However in the DCO the role of the project officer was widened to include on-site (main build and associated sites) landscape mitigation monitoring.

3. Proposals (draft)

- a. **Landscape Improvement Scheme.** A scheme to deliver area wide landscape improvements that provide habitat corridors to help all wildlife to adapt to climate change, corridor links between the woodlands on the north and south commons and heath reversion to link the heathland areas on the Quantocks.
 - i. Scheme budget: £400,000.
 - ii. Start date: Beginning of Phase 2 (unknown)
 - iii. Duration: 5-7 years from commencement of funding.
 - iv. Proposal: working with farmers and landowners, including organisations, aim to create corridors and 'stepping stones' to link woodland and heathland habitats between the northern Quantock Hills (Quantock Common SSSI and SAC) and the southern Quantock Hills.
 - v. Operation: potential areas for reversion / enhancement will be identified and agreed with landowners, NE, FC and other stakeholders prior to commencement of scheme. Part of the process will also develop solutions to on-going site maintenance post Sc106/DCO funding. These schemes will be refined at the beginning of the LIS. The QHAONB will employ a Landscape Project Officer to deliver the schemes on behalf of the landowners. It is envisaged that funding will provide habitat restoration / reversion works including soil / nutrient stripping, seed collection, planting,
 - vi. Area: All land within the Quantock Hills AONB boundary will be eligible BUT main project area as described in proposal.

- b. **Quantock Hills and Vale Landscape Development Fund.** A fund to support projects developed in conjunction with the Councils, which either restore or develop landscape features in the Quantock Hills and Vale, including hedge laying and planting, traditional standard orchard restoration, small woodland management, wild flower meadows, willow pollarding, dry stone wall restoration, planting native trees, pond restoration and a 'circular economic scheme'.
- i. Scheme Budget: £150,000
 - ii. Start date: Beginning of Phase 2 (unknown)
 - iii. Duration: 5-7 years.
 - iv. Proposal: To manage a discretionary fund that delivers the objectives as set out above. The fund will be open to landowners, farmers, organisations (such as community groups), parish councils, individuals and businesses.
 - v. Operation: To operate as the current Sustainable Development Fund. Those wishing to apply for a grant fill in an application form using the fund information sheet to provide guidance. The application is assessed by the project officer who ensures it meets the fund criteria and will make a recommendation. This recommendation is considered by a fund panel (current OWG with co-opted specialist members) that will decide whether to approval or reject the application. Approval of an application can be subject to additional conditions. The QHAONB would issue a grant acceptance. Once a project is complete the applicant will submit a claim form with evidence of expenditure and project outputs. The AONB Officer will check to ensure expenditure meets fund criteria and outputs have been achieved. If all requirements are met the claim is released for payment.
 - vi. Geographical range. The area is based on parishes within the Quantock Hills and Vale area where there is a visual impact of the proposed development upon that parish.
 - vii. Maximum Grant. The maximum grant will be £20,000.